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A PURSUIT of UNOBTRUSIVE PAINTING

A STUDY of ONESELF

George Schlüederberg

approved 5/25/78

College of Fine and Applied Arts

A PURSUIT of UNOBTRUSIVE PAINTING

There exists within me a desire to speak in a visual sense about life as an individual. To portray a feeling, a sense of life, visually. The act of creating through my hands, from my senses, brings a life to life that cannot be expressed through the use of words.

"Painting is a very difficult thing. It absorbs the whole man, body and soul - thus I have passed blindly many things which belong to real and political life...

"What I want to show in my work is the idea which hides itself behind so-called reality. I am seeking for the bridge which leads from the visible to the invisible, like the famous cabalist who once said: "If you wish to get hold of the invisible you must penetrate as deeply as possible into the visible"..."

A decision to study in a graduate program of the fine arts has enabled me to mature intellectually. Also, I have gained a finer self-assuredness of my media, which aids in the portrayal of this awareness.

Along with finding ourselves, our soul, comes an awareness of poets, writers, philosophers, artists of all areas, past and present, who have devoted themselves to the creation of the fine arts. For the advancement and not the destruction

of an honesty, a beauty, which is so needed in this society of ours.

"We must look and look and look till we live the painting and for a fleeting moment become identified with it. If we do not succeed in loving what through the ages has been loved, it is useless to lie ourselves into believing that we do. A good rough test is whether we feel that it is reconciling us with life.

"No artifact is a work of art if it does not help to humanize us. Without art, visual, verbal and musical, our world would have remained a jungle."2

It is this humanist quality that must be present within our arts. The presence of honesty, of truth will give our paintings worth beyond the value of currency. Without a humanist quality, without honesty, the art work is soon forgotten. In sadness, in today's art, there exists an overabundance of dishonest or slick, work. Too many of my fellow artists have lost their soul. It only clutters the market, disillusion the people, and angers those who work hard and truthfully.

"The public, yes, for one part is dissatisfied, but material greatness also finds applause, but do not forget that this is but a straw fire and that those who applaud generally do so only because it has become the fashion. But on the morrow of the banquet, there will be a void, a silence and indifference after all that noise."3

In joy, the painter's needs are but few. A good roof over his head, food in his stomach, and clothes upon his body. The rest he can find through his will and desire and his honesty. For in this cheapened, materialistic society, it is far greater for man to desire honesty, truth and goodness. This alone will create happiness, and happiness is what living is all about.

In and through my work I find happiness. When I begin a painting, it is though I have never had the pleasure to paint before. Everything is new and fresh. The smell of the oils, the sight of the colours flow into me and cause fulfillment, a satisfaction, that cannot be matched in any other facet of my life.

The artist must devote his existence to his work. A man's life is short. He must take care of himself to lengthen his years of existence. One cannot be ill too often, or little progress can be made in one's work.

The development of the artist's style, the visual portrayal of his soul, is an act of a natural human growth. This growth comes in stages, and produces an increasing awareness of oneself and one's surroundings. When this growth happens and is realized, it is extremely joyous and satisfying.

The development of the fine artist rests upon the development of draftsmanship. Far too many

painters today do not draw well, or do not draw at all. When this happens the act of drawing is missed, the painter is poorer, the beauty of drawing is forgotten.

All too often today's paintings are but a photographic replica, rendered with pigment. This slickness is quickly seen and sorrowfully felt. This act of projecting a photograph or rendering upon the canvas, outlining the projected image, then filling in the outlined image with pigment, is a mock, a slander upon the fine arts. I respect no one who would pursue such slickness or deal falsely within the arts, or for that matter, with any facet of life. They serve only to confuse and degrade both life and the arts.

To draw and to draw well is the bedrock of painting. Lacking the ability to render in a precise and assured hand leads to many problems in the execution of the final work. Through drawing comes the development of good composition, an essential precursor to the application of colour and pigment.

Working composition through drawing eliminates excess subject matter, a clutter that hinders the organization of the painting. The act of simplifying area and form within the composition is important for artist and his audience. Through drawing, a sense of scale is developed. The proper size of the canvas can be ascertained to best portray the desired image.

"I wish now to state my views about the noble art of painting. Let every man who is here understand this well: design, which by another name is called drawing, and consists of it, is the fount and body of painting and sculpture and architecture and of every other kind of painting and the root of all sciences. Let whoever may have attained to so much as to have the power of drawing know that he holds a great treasure; he will be able to make figures higher than any tower, either in colors or carved from the block, and he will not be able to find a well or enclosure which does not appear circumscribed and small to his brave imagination. And he will be able to paint in fresco in the manner of old Italy, with all the mixtures and varieties of color usually employed in it. He will be able to paint in oils very suavely with more knowledge, daring, and patience than painters. And finally, on a small piece of parchment he will be most perfect and great, thanks to his power of design and drawing..."⁴

Michelangelo speaks well, therefore, upon the importance of good draftsmanship. Of course he was a sculptor, primarily, and not a painter. But we can all see how beautifully he painted the Sistine Chapel. Never before had he painted, and upon such a vast scale, as well. It was upon his ability to render, to draw, that he was able to accomplish such an enormous task. The drawing came first, the colour, secondly.

The act of drawing is of a very serious nature, and is not to be overlooked in the hurry to arrive at a final, or supposedly greater, visual statement. The great artist, Daumier, was above all a most excellent draftsman, and secondly a fine painter. If one could draw as well as Daumier, one need not necessarily be a superb colourist. For the rendering of subject will portray the feelings and desire of the artist so superbly. Yet Daumier handled colour brilliantly too, and the results are, therefore, exquisite.

The act of drawing is not merely a discharge of line, a reproduction of contour, but a means of expression itself. The artist who can draw well has many areas of the fine arts open to him.

And yet the use of colour as a form of expression is one of the main reasons behind my decision to paint. The pigment is fluid, and applicable by either brush or knife. Both the brush and the knife are comfortable in my hands. I can push the paint around until it works for me. The paint can be reworked until the desired image is reached.

Colour, like music, has sound. The painter is a composer of a musical score, played visually upon canvas. The painter finds certain colours to express his soul. Painting is very soulful. To me, it is very much like a saxophonist blowing notes to create a feeling. The painter creates feelings from the use of colour. The artist must

find his colours to express his soul, his inside feelings.

In my development of the understanding of colour, I have studied many painters from many periods of art. From one period in time, the Italian Renaissance, I have learned a great deal about colour. I have learned that a few necessary earth-created colours, rather than a "full palette," can achieve a wide range of tones, a balance, a harmony. This harmony of colour is very important in the creation of a wholeness to the painted image.

The colours I use are Ultramarine Blue, light and deep, with Titanium white added for a slight opaqueness, this deepened with mars black, Yellow Ochre, lightened with white and enriched or deepened with mars red, Mars Red, and Alizarine Crimson. Through the inter-mixing of these colours I can achieve colour and tone that portray my feelings and soul.

I find enjoyment in working from memory. From past experiences within my mind and soul. These memories are worked up through sketches to arrive at a solidified image. Once the subject matter has composition, proportion and form, I can express feeling through the application of colour.

In the study of the masters of the past, both painters and sculptors, I wish to pay tribute to those who were the most beneficial to my personal

growth as an artist. Giotto, Fra Angelico, Masaccio, Donatello and Verrocchio. In a more recent period, Max Beckmann and Vincent Van Gogh.

Living expression, captured through colour and form. The elimination of excess, a harmony of balance. Solid composition, simple colour, beautiful tones. A very moving human honesty. These qualities are present in all works of the artists mentioned.

"I wish you to discover your own selves, and to that end many ways and many detours are necessary.

"I do not have to tell you that there can be no question of thoughtless imitation of nature.

"Please do remember this maxim - the most important I can give you: If you want to reproduce an object, two elements are required: first the identification with the object must be perfect, and secondly, it should contain, in addition, something quite different. This second element is difficult to explain. Almost as difficult as to discover one's self. In fact it's just this element of our own self that we are all in search of."5

And yet, I realize that I must form my own style, and use my drawing, my colour, to arrive at a true individuality, or essence, based upon my search for goodness, beauty and truth.

QUOTATIONS - FOOTNOTES

¹Max Beckmann, from Artists on Art from the 14th to the 20th century. Compiled and edited by Robert Goldwater and Marco Treves, copyright 1945, Pantheon Books, Inc., pp.447-448.

²Bernard Berenson, from Italian Painters of the Renaissance, preface. 1 Tati, Settignano, Florence: January, 1952, Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1959.

³Vincent Van Gogh, from The Letters to His Brother, vol.II. London: Constable and Co., Ltd. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1927.

⁴Michelangelo, A Self-Portrait, edited with commentaries and new translations by Robert J. Clements. p.10 Art and Letters. The Theorist on Art. New York University Press, University of London Press, Ltd., 1968.

⁵Max Beckmann, collected by Peter Selz, with contributions by Harold Joachim and Perry T. Rathbone. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Art Institute of Chicago. Distributed by Doubleday and Co., Garden City, N.Y.: Quote p.91.

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ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Fred Meyer

Date 5-25-78

Subject George Schlunderberg Thesis

It is necessary that a graduate painter have himself and his means together. George, I believe, is prepared in both respects.

I have enjoyed working with him.



Office Memo

One Lomb Memorial Drive
Rochester, New York 14623

To Robwrt H. Johnston, Dean, College of Fine and Applied Arts
From Fred Meyer
Date May 25, 1978
Subject Thesis - George Schluederberg

I recommend that the thesis "A Pursuit of Unobtrusive Painting" be accepted as satisfying the requirements of the Master of Fine Arts degree.

Yours truly,
Fred Meyer

RECEIVED

MAY 25 1978

Dr. Robt. Johnston, Dean
College of Fine & Applied Arts

*approved
5/26/78*

Coll. Fine and App. Arts.















